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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000839

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SUBJECT: BRITISH AND FRENCH VIEWS OF QATAR'S INITIATIVE ON
DARFUR

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron, for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

(C) KEY POINTS

-- French Special Envoy for Darfur Issa Maraut told U.S. Special Envoy Williamson November 23 in advance of Williamson's meetings with Qatari officials that Minister of State Al-Mahmoud understands quite well the issues of Darfur, is hard-working and wants to succeed.

-- The British Ambassador John Hawkins observed that Al-Mahmoud is now spending 90 percent of his time on Darfur.

-- The British, Hawkins said, essentially want progress on the ground in Darfur, no focus on the International Criminal Court deferment of indictments for now, and close cooperation between Bassole and Qatar.

End Key Points.

1. (C) In a November 23 meeting with French Special Envoy for Sudan Issa Maraut, U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan Richard Williamson (accompanied by Ambassador) underscored the need for the P-3 to work together to encourage the rebel groups to take risks and participate in Qatar's Initiative on Darfur.

2. (C) Williamson also pointed out that the International Criminal Court indictments were a pressure point for Sudanese President Bashir. If the regime has enough stress, semi-autonomy for Darfur may be viewed as better than the break-up of Sudan. The question is whether the Government of Sudan can be persuaded on this point. Given the added pressure on the President, those around Bashir are considering their options.

3. (C) Maraut agreed with Williamson and, noting that he had been on the ground in Doha for more than a month consulting with the GOQ on Darfur, said Bassole was working & cleverly8 with Qatar. He added that the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) is a problem. The group intends to visit Doha to consult with the Qataris, but it is often their tactic to negotiate and take military action at the same time, which is not helpful.

4. (C) Turning to Abdul Wahid, Williamson observed that he has to play with the Qataris and asked Maraut for his thoughts. Would the French help pressure him, given that he resides in Paris? Maraut described Abdul Wahid as stubborn but agreed with Williamson that his participation is vital. Maraut encouraged Williamson to take up the issue of French leverage on Abdul Wahid during his upcoming MFA consultations in Paris.

ANY ADVICE?

15. (C) Williamson asked Maraut for advice on his scheduled November 24 meetings with the GOQ. Maraut responded that the U.S. need not worry about UN and African Union mediator Djibril Bassole having a central role, as favored by the P-3. They are working closely together. Minister of State Ahmed Al-Mahmoud sees JEM and Abdul Wahid as the main rebel elements with whom he must contend. He appears to understand that the rebels do not welcome an Arab League role in the mediation process. Asked about Abdallah Yehya of SLM Unity and Minni Minnawi of SLM, Maraut said Minnawi was a problem for the Sudanese Government during the negotiations in Libya. Perhaps, Maraut speculated, Minnawi is now out of the game. Williamson noted that while Minnawi's role in potential discussions may not be a major issue, it cannot be ignored.

16. (C) Maraut said that Al-Mahmoud would seek the P-3's advice, and work closely with Bassole, on the participation of groups in any Doha conference. Williamson said he would look to the French for advice on encouraging JEM. He observed that Al-Mahmoud is positively engaged and wants to succeed. He is sincere and hard-working, and he now understands quite well the issues of Darfur.

THE BRITISH VIEW

17. (C) British Ambassador to Qatar John Hawkins observed that Qatar likes to advance regional initiatives. He said he was

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unsure why Qatar had an interest in Sudan, to which Williamson responded that it likely came about from the Amir's early September meeting in Damascus with President Sarkozy. Hawkins observed that Al-Mahmoud is spending 90 percent of his time on Sudan and would be pleased by Williamson's visit, since the French, Canadian and British envoys for Sudan had all met with him.

18. (C) The British, Hawkins said, essentially want progress on the ground in Darfur, no focus on the International Criminal Court deferment of indictments for now, and close cooperation between Bassole and Qatar. Asked by Ambassador if one should be subordinate to the other, Hawkins replied that the UK believes both should work and coordinate together. Williamson offered that neither one need to be designated as the lead so long as there is mutual coordination between them. He added that the role of the P-3 matters, because the rebels have more confidence in the P-3 than in the Arab League.

19. (U) Special Envoy Williamson has cleared this message.

LeBaron